



McClelland (Robert McClelland), 1853

Named for Robert McClelland, the Secretary of the Interior during the Franklin Pierce administration.

Type/Rig/Class: Topsail schooner; *Cushing*-class

Builder: J. M. Hood, Somerset, Massachusetts

Launched: 11 July 1853

Commissioned: 1853

Decommissioned: N/A

Disposition: Surrendered by her commanding officer to authorities of the State of Louisiana after the state seceded from the Union.

Length: 92'

Beam: 22'

Draft: 9'

Displacement: 152-174 tons

Cost: \$

Machinery: None

Performance & Endurance:

Max:

Cruising:

Complement: 13+

Armament: Reported as to 1 to 5 guns

Design:

These vessels were significantly larger than those built in the same year by Page and Allen. They were also quite different from the *Joe Lane* and class; about 10 feet shorter on deck and 2 feet deeper in the hold. They also may have had more freeboard. Note: The CUSHING Class vessels were named after members of the Franklin Pierce administration: James Campbell, postmaster general; Caleb Cushing, attorney general; Jefferson Davis, secretary of war; James C. Dobbin, secretary of the Navy; William A. Marcy, secretary of state; Robert McClelland, secretary of the interior.

History:

The *Robert McClelland* was built at Somerset, Massachusetts by Mr. J. M. Hood. Revenue Captain N. L. Coste was ordered to superintend the cutter's construction. She was christened *Robert McClelland* on 18 April 1853 and was launched on 11 July 1853. She was to be fitted out in New York.

On 7 November 1853 she was ordered to Mobile, Alabama and she set sail on 23 November. She arrived at Mobile on 7 December 1853. On 14 January 1854 she was referred to as having been ordered to carry dispatches to naval vessels at Bermuda, relative to the disabled steamer San Francisco. The *Robert McClelland* cruised the coasts of Louisiana and Texas.

On 29 May 1859 she was ordered to transfer her officers and crew to the cutter *Washington*, then to proceed to New York for repairs. She arrived at New York on 11 July 1859. On 1 September 1860 it was reported that she arrived at South West Pass, Mississippi, "there to exchange officers, crew and stations with the WASHINGTON."

She was ordered to be permanently located at New Orleans on 8 November 1860. On 31 January 1861, her commanding officer, Revenue Captain J. G. Breshwood and his second in command, Revenue Lieutenant Caldwell, surrendered their command to the State of Louisiana. The cutter was subsequently turned over to the Confederate States Navy. She was renamed *Pickens* and Captain J. G. Breshwood, CSN, now commissioned in the Confederate States Navy, was retained in command.

CSS *Pickens* operated in the lower Mississippi during 1861 and early 1862, in Commodore Hollins' squadron fighting the Federal gunboats in the engagement of 12 October 1861 off Head of Passes, Mississippi River.

No further record of her service or of her ultimate fate is available.

Sources:

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Washington, DC: USGPO.

Donald Canney. *U.S. Coast Guard and Revenue Cutters, 1790-1935.*
Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995.

U.S. Coast Guard. *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard: 1790 - December 31, 1933.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934; 1989 (reprint).